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Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 COME-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
/023 W
---------- 090010 /11
R 211745Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6769

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BENC, ELAB, MR
SUBJECT: LANG-PRITCHARD SUGAR REFINERY PROJECT

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 2836

1. LANG ENGINEERING VICE PRESIDENT (OPERATIONS) BRAMPTON AND NOUAKCHOTT CONSTRUCTION CHIEF TATE TOOK INITIATIVE TO BRIEF AMBASSADOR DECEMBER 20 ON SUGAR REFINERY.

2. GIVEN PROGRESS MADE DURING PAST FOUR WEEKS, BRAMPTON IS REASONABLY OPTIMISTIC THAT LANG-PRITCHARD WILL BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE MECHANICAL COMPLETION BY END JANUARY. AT THAT POINT, RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROJECT WILL BE TRANSFERRED FROM CONSTUCTION STAFF TO START-UP TEAM. TESTS OF EQUIPMENT, TRIAL RUNS, AND ULTIMATELY FIRST PRODUCTION RUN WILL TAKE FROM 60 TO 90 DAYS, DEPENDING ON CAPABILITY OF EMBRYONIC MAURITANIAN SUGAR REFINING ORGANIZATION TO TAKE HOLD AND PERFORM ITS SHARE OF START-UP TASKS. ABILITY OF L-P TO MEET THIS TIGHT SCHEDULE DEPENDS ON ABSENCE OF (A) ANY MAJOR HITCHES AND (B) LABOR DISPUTES.

3. BRAMPTON CITES FOLLOWING AS UNDERPINNING FOR HIS MILD OPTIMISM: (A) INTENSIVE SEARCH FOR MISSING MATERIALS (PARA 3. REFTEL) REVEALED VIRTUALLY ALL OF SHORT ITEMS WERE
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PLUMBING AND ELECTRICAL FITTINGS, ETC., OF IMMEDIATE USE IN DO-IT-YOURSELF AND LOCAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS. THUS SHORTAGES ATTRIBUTED TO PETTY PILFERAGE NOT PIPELINE SNAGS. L-P MOUNTED CRASH PROCUREMENT EFFORT IN U.S. AND CHARTERED PLANE TO FLY IN MISSING MATERIAL. (B) COMPUTER PROJECTIONS INDICATE MECHANICAL COMPLETION BY END

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JANUARY WEEL WITHIN REACH. (C) REFINERY WAREHOUSE IS
40 PERCENT FULL OF RAW SUGAR, AND SACHED RAW MATERIAL
CONTINUES TO FLOW IN BY TRUCK FROM NEARBY WHARF. (D)
MAURITANIAN WATER ADMINISTRATION BEGAN LAYING FRESH
WATER SUPPLY PIPELINE FROM WHARF TO REFINERY LAST WEEK.

4. CRITICALITY OF LABOR ELEMENT IN TIME CALCULATIONS
WAS UNDERSCORED LATE LAST WEEK. CONSTRUCTION CHIEF WAS
CONVINCED BY MID-DECEMBER THAT EXPATRIATE LABOR FORCE
HAD QUIETLY DECIDED TO IMPOSE SLOW-DOWN IN ORDER TO PRO-
LONG SALARY PAYMENTS UNTIL OPENING SPRING CONSTRUCTION
SEASON IN UK. (BRITISH CRAFTSMEN HAD GREETED EARLY
DECEMBER OFFER OF END JANUARY MECHANICAL COMPLETION BONUS
WITH DERISION.) BRAMPTON AND TATE THEREFORE DECIDED TO
TIGHTEN UP IN ORDER TO IMPROVE SIGNIFICANTLY PRODUCTIVITY
OF LABOR FORCE. ISSUE THEY CHOSE WAS SLIPSHOD OBSERVANCE
OF SAFETY RULES. TATE FIRED TZBNMKND ONE US VIOLATORS
OF HARD-HAT RULE EARLY DECEMBER 17. BY NOON, MAJORITY OF
BRITS HAD JOINED IN SOLIDARITY STRIKE. BY SUNDOWN, 50
BRITISH AND ONE US EX-EMPLOYEES WERE ON CHARTERED AIR-
PLANE FOR DAKAR. (18 OF ORIGINAL 68 UK CRAFTSMEN WHO
REMAINED WERE PRECISELY THOSE TATE AND L-P SUPERVISORS
HAD IDENTIFIED AS BEST WORKERS IN GROUP.) L-P NOW PLANS
TO RECRUIT REPLACEMENTS IN US, HANDPICKING MEN KNOWN TO
COMPANY AND INTERESTED IN SHORT OVERSEAS CONTRACT (AT
BONUS WAGES) BEFORE BEGINNING 1977 CONSTRUCTION SEASON
IN APPALACHIA. MEANWHILE, SHARP INCREASE IN WORK TEMPO AND
LABOR OUTPUT POST-CRUNCH SUGGESTS REDUCED LABOR FORCE MAY
PRODUCE ALMOST AS MUCH AS LAGER BUT MUCH SLOWER GROUP OVER
NEST THREE WEEKS.
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5. BRAMPTON ALSO REPORTED L-P FACES TIGHT FINANCIAL
SITUATION AND SERIOUS CASH FLOW PROBLEM PENDING RECEIPT
FIVE PERCENT RETAINER AT MECHANICAL COMPLETION (ROUGHTLY
ONE MILLION DOLLARS). GIRM DECLINED TO AGREE TO SUBSTI-
TUTION BANK GUARANTEE FOR C TAINER. HE ACKNOWLEDGED L-P
MAY ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING GIRM AGREEMENT THAT
MECHANICAL COMPLETION HAS BEEN ACHIEVED, NOTING THAT BEL-
GIAN CONSULTANT HAS ALREADY SURFACED DEFINITION WHICH IS
(A) UNACCEPTABLE, AND (B) IN CONFLICT WITH DEFINITION IN
CONTRACT.

6 BRAMPTON CONCLUDED PRESENTATION WITH REITERA-
TION ON BEHALF OLIPHANT OF L-P'S INTENTION TO COMPLETE
PROJECT IN PROPER AND HONORABLE FASFION.
HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SUGAR, AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NOUAKC03113
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760469-0491
From: NOUAKCHOTT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761224/aaaaautp.tel
Line Count: 113
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 NOUAKCHOTT 2836
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 JUN 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <13 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LANG-PRITCHARD SUGAR REFINERY PROJECT
TAGS: BENC, ELAB, MR, LANG/PRICHARD
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006